

May 2021

Upcoming events

NH Mental Health Peer Alliance, Tue, May 18, 10 AM. Come, let your voice be heard. The Alliance is made up of adults with lived experience who want to improve mental health services in NH, organizing to advocate, educate, and inform. Please contact greg@connectionspeer support.org for an invitation.

Board of Directors Meeting Wed, May 26, 4 PM Members and staff welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact greg@connectionspeer support.org for an invitation.

Community Meeting Wed May 12, 10 AM Whether offering ideas for new groups or getting updates on Step Up/Step Down. This a chance for our entire community to gather and be involved in making Connections even better. We need your voice!



From Fear-Based to Hope-Based



“From fear-based to hope-based” Last month Step Up/Step Down Program Manager, Kali Moulton spoke about her experiences in the mental health system. This month, she shares her vision of an alternative, empowering approach to supporting those of us with mental health challenges. Please read it all, starting on page 4.

CPSC SCHEDULE MAY 2021

- **Budgeting, Job, or Computer Skills**

One-on-One Support: Call to set up a time

Christina from Cornerstone Financial is available for one-on-one support for budgeting, and Rachel is here for computer and job skills. Whether you want to get a handle on your budget, brush up your resume, or get comfortable with your computer, we've got you covered. Call us at 603 427 6966.

**Memorial Day, May 31
Center will be closed but
online groups will run.**

- **Daily Check-in**

Mon thru Fri, 9:15 AM and 1:15 PM. Mon and Fri are online only. A chance to connect with peers, set goals, or reflect upon your day.

- **Walking Group**

Mon and Fri 1:00 PM We socialize as we explore local trails. Call 603 570 8899 before noon to confirm location, or if you need a ride.

- **Hearing Voices Group (online only)**

Mon 11 AM. Support for those who are hearing voices, seeing visions, or experiencing other unusual sensory experiences.

- **Journaling Group (online only)**

Mon 2 PM. Reflections and inspiration. Come to journal or spin a tale. A directed prompt will be offered, but all topics are welcome.

- **Dual Recovery (online only)**

Mon 3 PM. For those struggling with substance use disorder and mental health issues, to share coping strategies and support each other.

- **WRAP Topics**

Wed 10 AM. With Wellness Recovery Action Plan, you explore and create a plan for yourself to stay well, respond to stressors, or even to a crisis. It is a powerful evidence-based wellness tool.

- **Arts and Crafts**

Tue 11 AM A time for creative expression or observing the seasons; you never know what might be in store, always a surprise.

- **Lunch and Learn**

Tue 12 PM Bring a brown bag lunch, watch a video or read a short article about a wellness-related topic, and see where the discussion leads us. Do you have a one that you would like to share?

- **IPS Topics**

Tue 2 PM and Thur 10 AM. Intentional Peer Support is the model we practice here at Connections of building mutually supportive relationships. This group gives us a chance to learn and deepen our practice.

- **Positive Thinking**

Wed 10 AM How we see the world has real effects on our physical and psychological well-being. We identify our negative thinking patterns and explore ways to replace them with positive ones.

- **WRAP Through Art**

Wed 11 AM. Making one of our most powerful wellness tools, our Wellness Recovery Action Plans, beautiful! Each week we will complete an art project that visualizes the week's theme.

- **Gardening with Rachel**

Wed 2 PM

Celebrate the season! We'll root houseplants and our own herbs and flowers

- **Nutrition in the News**

Thur 11 AM

Each week we will cover a different nutrition or health topic. Bring your questions or suggestions for topics.

- **Depression and Anxiety Group**

Thur 2 PM. We offer a safe place to explore feelings such as sadness and fear, and learn from each other how we can respond to them.

- **A.R.T. (online only)**

Fri 11 AM. Art of Recovery Together. Come visit while working on any creative project you wish.

- **Healthy Relationships (online only)**

Fri 2 PM. Here we explore ways of changing past patterns of behavior and of developing healthy relationships in our lives.

CPSC SCHEDULE MAY 2021

	Monday Remote Only	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday Remote Only
9:15-10:00	AM Check-in	AM Check-in Walking/ Stretching	AM Check-in Walking/ Stretching	AM Check-in Walking/ Stretching	AM Check-in
10-10:45		WRAP Topics	Positive Thinking	IPS Topics	A.R.T.
11-11:45	Hearing Voices	Arts and Crafts	WRAP Through Art	Nutrition in the News	
12-1	Lunch and Learn				
1:15-1:45	PM Check-in 1:00 Walking Group	PM Check-in	PM Check-in	PM Check-in	PM Check-in 1:00 Walking Group
2:00-2:45	Journal Group	IPS Topics	Gardening with Rachel	Anxiety/ Depression	Healthy Relationships
3:00-3:45-	Dual Recovery				

All services are free and no referral is needed

- Tue, Wed, and Thur groups are held at our center at 544 Islington St, Portsmouth, as well as online.
- Mon and Fri groups are online only.
- The center is available for drop-ins, but, due to social distancing, we suggest you call ahead to make sure there is room.
- Call us at 603-427-6966 by 4 PM the day before to arrange transportation to the center the following morning, and by 11 AM same day to come in the afternoon.
- All participants must wear a mask while in the center or in the van.
- Connections' building may close for bad weather; we'll still be available online.
- To join groups online, follow this link:
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/709997085>
- If you're new to GoToMeeting, get the app here:
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/709997085>
- You can also dial in using any phone: +1 (571) 317-3122 **Access Code: 709-997-085**

May Special Programming

- **Wed, May 19, 1:15 PM Introduction to Meditation:** Something we all can use every day. Brian Bliss of blissmindfulness.com teaches Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. He will present an introduction to mindfulness meditation as a means of stress management
- **Community Picnic at Prescott Park, May 26, 11 AM** A great chance to socialize safely and enjoy our beautiful community. We provide hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, coleslaw, and drinks! Call to reserve a spot or for transportation.

OUR VOICES

Where I'm Going

Imagine having a broken leg. The pain's made you lose your appetite, but you're finally craving food – specifically, a chicken salad sandwich. You go into the grocery to buy mayonnaise, which is a challenge because you're on crutches and you can't quite reach the jar.

A well-meaning nutritionist sees your struggle and offers to help. Then she notices you want mayonnaise.

"Oh, no," she objects. "That is NOT a healthy choice! Come with me!" She then drags you over to the aisle with olive oil.

You protest, "But I can't make a chicken salad sandwich with olive oil! That's not what I want!"

The nutritionist is moving so fast that you keep hitting shelves and knocking things over.

"Trust me," she insists. "I'm a professional, and I know what your body needs."

You look around to the other shoppers, hoping for a second opinion or support, but they only shrug their shoulders, as if to say, "Well, she's the expert."

That scenario may seem pretty ridiculous, and yet I'm sure many of you have experienced this – a well-meaning individual taking control over your mental health and deciding what's best for you. When I went to the hospital as an adult in my early twenties, I was exhausted from being pulled in a million different directions by well-meaning people who "knew" what I needed. People had determined that simultaneously I had nothing wrong with me while also everything was wrong.

Together, we can explore so many more possibilities than by being on our own. We don't have to be afraid as we test out new paths. We can test them side by side and together



I want to be clear. I was, and still am, proud of myself for self-admitting into a psychiatric ward both in my teens and in my twenties. Learning how to recognize my rock bottom was excruciating, but in its way, helpful. It's hard to accept that maybe you can't go it alone. There are so many unknowns and fears associated with saying, "Hey, I need a bit more help than this."

There were a few benefits from being in the hospital. I didn't have to worry about mealtimes anymore and was given food that was much healthier than what I had been able to make for myself. Laundry was provided or washed for me. It was mostly quiet, which allowed me to breathe and take space from the outside pressures.

Most importantly, I didn't feel judged. Even when other patients on the ward were mean, they didn't judge me for my anxiety or depression. The staff never accused me of lying about how I felt or tried to convince me that depression and anxiety aren't real.

But there were, and are, problems. When you go into the hospital, your control is taken away. Others determine whether you're "well." You're treated as if you are sick and will never be able to function as a contributing member of society. It makes you question your judgment. Hospitalization is an extreme choice. If Step-Up Step-Down had been around back then, I would have avoided hospitalization altogether.



Step Up Step Down is a voluntary 30-90 day residential program for those who feel they need more intensive support but wish to avoid a hospitalization, or those who have been hospitalized but are looking for support as they transition back to everyday life. It is non-clinical and peer-run.

I've spent many years thinking about what I would have done differently if I'd been in charge of my treatment. I'd create a space where the focus was on each person's individual needs. Maybe some people need medication. Perhaps some need to try fresh coping mechanisms. Everyone would have access to a variety of services that would lend a helping hand. The program would support people as they slowly transitioned back into their lives, step-by-step. Building friendships would be encouraged, because there's nothing like talking with someone who just gets it.

When you contact SUSD, one of the first questions we ask is, "What are *your* goals?" Your goals will form the backbone of your program. When you arrive, the building feels like a home. You keep your own clothes. There is a kitchen to make yourself a cup of tea. If you wish to go to the grocery or visit a friend, you are free to do so. When something isn't working for you, we will listen. And perhaps most the most important thing; everyone you talk will have been there themselves.

I'm glad I found Intentional Peer Support. Having the opportunity to build this Step-Up Step-Down program is literally a dream come true. I've already been planning it out for years; I just didn't know it at the time.

I want to give my peers another option to begin learning with the peers, building connections every step of the way. Not everyone will agree all the time, and that's OK because together, we can explore so many more possibilities than by being on our own. We don't have to be afraid as we test out new paths. We can test them side by side and together.

That's what I want for Step-Up Step-Down. That's what I'm moving toward.



~Kali Moulton

DID SOMEONE SAY, "FUN-RAISER?"

Check it out! On Tuesday, May 18 from 4 PM until closing, a portion of the proceeds from every flatbread goes to Connections Peer Support Center

BENEFIT NIGHT AT FLATBREAD

JOIN US FOR DELICIOUS FOOD
AND A GREAT CAUSE!

MAY 18TH, 2021 - 4:00 PM UNTIL CLOSE

\$3.50

PER LARGE

\$1.75

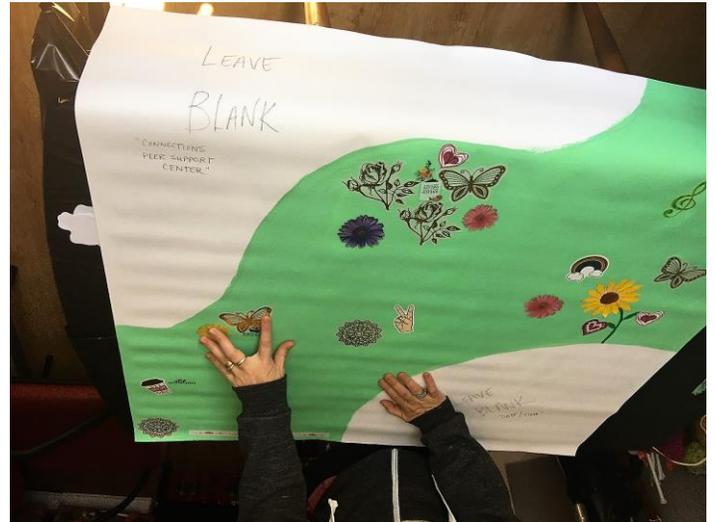
PER SMALL

FLATBREAD PIZZA IN PORTSMOUTH
ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO TO
CONNECTIONSPEERSUPPORT.ORG

DID SOMEONE SAY, “FUN-RAISER?”

And, if you drop by on Tuesday, May 18, you won't just be able to scarf up some incredible flatbread; you can also check out Connections' latest masterpiece. We needed a banner for our Flatbread evening so we're doing it Connections style: all together! We have been thinking about Spring as a season of growth (for the Earth and for ourselves), so that was a natural theme. Creating the banner has become a community art project, as each of us adds our own flower, balloon, or butterfly, our banner bursts into bloom. You will have to show up on May 18th to see the final masterpiece

How it started...



How it's going...



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Please send any additions or corrections to

info@connectionspeersupport.org

Crisis Text: Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor
www.crisistextline.org

To connect with local resources in the Seacoast area, go to www.211nh.org OR call 211.

Service Link:

Your link to information and support services within your community.

<https://www.servicelink.nh.gov/>

Toll Free Number: 1-866-634-9412

Peer Respite:

Peer Respite is a 24-hour, peer-driven, short-term, non-medical alternative to hospitalization. To begin your pre-qualifying application and interview, call the following respite centers: **PEER RESPITE PROGRAMS ARE SUSPENDED DUE TO COVID-19. PLEASE CALL OR CHECK PSA WEBSITES FOR UPDATES**

Stepping Stones, Claremont, NH. Respite 603-543-1388, Stepping Stone Peer Center: 603-543-1388,

Toll Free: 1-888-582-0920,
www.steppingstonenextstep.org

H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support of Greater Nashua, Nashua, NH. Crisis Respite: 603-864-8769, Peer Support Center: 603-882-8400,
www.heartspsa.org.

Monadnock Area Peer Support Agency, Keene NH 03431, Respite 603 352-5093 or 866-352-5093,
www.monadnockpsa.org

Legal Help:

NH Legal Assistance 603 431-7411
NH Pro Bono 1 800-639-5290
Legal Advice & Referral Center 1800-639-5290
Disability Rights Center: 1-800-834-1721

Meals:

Salvation Army Food Truck parked on State St near South Church, **Portsmouth:** Dinner Daily 5:00 PM, Breakfast Mon-Fri 7:00-8:00 AM, Takeout only

Middle St Baptist Church, 18 Court St, Portsmouth Community Lunch, Wednesday 12 PM-1 PM. Takeout only

St. John's Church, Chapel St Portsmouth Community Lunch: Thursday 12 PM-1 PM. Takeout only

Community Health Services:

Families First: Providing health and dental care, as well as parent and family support.

Portsmouth location: 100 Campus Drive, Suite 12, Portsmouth (603) 422-8208

Food Banks:

Operation Blessing: 600A Lafayette Rd, Portsmouth: Call for an appointment: (603) 430-8561

Gather: 210 West Rd, Suite 3, Portsmouth. Monday-Thursday 10 AM – 3 PM by appointment, Friday 9 AM-1 PM. info@gathernh.org or 603 436 9641

Mental Health/Substance Misuse Resources:

Alcoholics Anonymous, A.A. World Services, Inc., 24-Hour Hotline 1-800-593-3330; www.aa.org/

NAMI NH, www.naminh.org

National Suicide Prevention 1 800-273-TALK (8255),
www.suicidepreventionlife.org/

NH Specialized Information and Referral Center is available 24/7, 365 days a year. Simply dial 211

Granite Pathways Rehabilitation Services 10 Ferry St, Suite 319, Concord NH granitepathways.org

Safe Harbor, 603-225-9540,
www.safeharborrecoverynh.org

Seacoast Mental Health Center, Inc. 603 431-6703, <http://www.smhc-nh.org/>

Seacoast Pathways, 603-812-9031,
www.seacoastpathways.org/

Transportation:

ACT (Alliance for Community Transportation) 603-834-6010,
triplink@communityrides.org

COAST (Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation) (603) 743-5777 www.coastbus.org

VIRTUAL EVENTS (ALL FREE!)

Please note, that while all events are free, most do require you to pre-register; just follow the links!

Weekly Meditation

Wednesdays, 12:15 PM

An old favorite, Portsmouth Library's weekly meditation, with a rotating roster of local teachers.

<https://portsmouthpl.librarycalendar.com/events/weekly-meditation-19>

New England Lighthouses and the People Who Kept Them

Mon, May 17, 6 PM

Portsmouth College Women's Club presents an evening with Jeremy D'Entremont, the official historian of the American Lighthouse Foundation and the founder of Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouses. Jeremy tells the history of New England's historic and picturesque lighthouses primarily focusing on the colorful and dramatic stories of lighthouse keepers and their families

<https://portsmouthpl.librarycalendar.com/events/lighthouses>

Processing the Pandemic: Using Comics for Humor and Resilience During COVID-19

Tue, May 18, 4 PM

"Processing the Pandemic" is a joint presentation and workshop event. We will start with a 1-hour presentation by Dr. Shirlene Obuobi (@shirlywhirlmd), a resident doctor and artist who will share her experiences creating comics during the pandemic. This will be followed by a 1-hour workshop led by Dr. Rachele Cruz (Creative Writing, UCR). Dr Cruz will share techniques and practices to use comics as a platform to reflect on our own pandemic experiences.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/processing-the-pandemic-using-comics-for-humorresilience-during-covid-19-tickets-148278245223?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Extra Gentle Mat Yoga

Thursdays, 6 PM

This gentle, adaptive mat yoga class incorporates breathing and mindfulness with seated and standing postures at a slow and welcoming pace for students of all levels. Each class is joined by a string musician who will play live in the final relaxation at the end of class..

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/unhurried-conversation-host-david-zinger-april-tickets-137644555571?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1

Six Word Stories Workshop

Tue, May 11, 2 PM

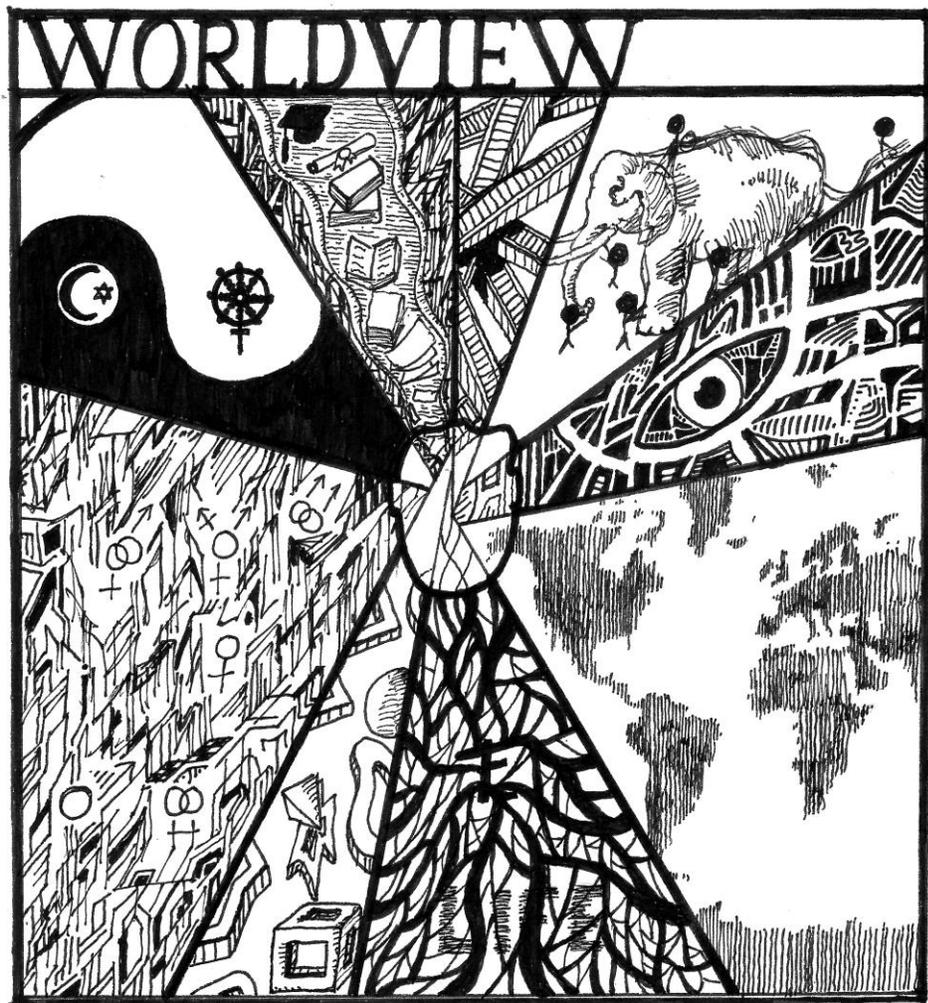
Join writers and See Me Community Champions Bridget Dickson, Liam Rankin, Chik Duncan at this online workshop as part of SMHAF 2021.

This is an opportunity to learn how to get creative in just 6 words and use this to explore ideas of 'normality'. Just bring along pen, paper and your imagination and join in this fun and accessible workshop!

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/six-word-stories-workshop-tickets-46981791495?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1

INSPIRATION

This evocative piece comes from artist, Anand Sharma (@linesofanand on Facebook and Instagram if you would like to see more of their work). It is part of a series on the four tasks of Intentional Peer Support created as a final presentation following their completing IPS Core Training. In IPS “Worldview” is defined as how we have learned what we know. This month we have talked about how the Worldview of Peer Support is different from the worldview of traditional mental health care. What can you tell us about your worldview?



THE MONTHLY PUZZLE

From Fear-based to Hope-based

This month, Kali Moulton, our Step-Up Step-Down Program Manager shared her vision of a different kind of support, one based on mutual respect and connection. This month's puzzle uses words from Kali's article. What do these mean to you?

I N M Q P N T N T I B W B X R
J J I N Z B P Z Y L F E R G V
K H X Y Z C Y D X A C O B B G
F W D K R Z A O S K U C V Y D
B V Z H T F V O G U R E E P E
L T L A N H B W L U S N X C Y
A R V U E U E H N E M B N L Q
T O M J U L W T R L I A G O F
G P L T L Y E R X N T N S N L
A P B N B E E O X P S W S G M
E U E I D S E N E G E B Q P R
T S A F P G D C O N T R O L D
S F M E V X C M F J Y Y W A K
O X C O A A I D Y I R V Z A T
H T R A N S I T I O N K F T R

Northwood

Kali

SUSD

Peer

Acceptance

Respect

Control

Wellness

Support





If you are struggling with mental health issues, you may benefit from being with others who have similar experiences. Intentional Peer Support is about making and sustaining **mutually supportive relationships**. When people are mutual partners in a relationship, there is equality; one person is not the “helper” to the other, both benefit and can support each other working toward what we want in life. It

is a positive, hope-based approach, helping us to determine actions we can take to reach our goals.

CPSC is open to everyone 18 and older seeking support in pursuing mental health wellness with an emphasis on hope and recovery.

All services are free and no referral is required.

**Warmline telephone support, staffed by trained peers, available 5-10 PM seven days a week.
Please call us at: 603-427-6966**

Connections Peer Support Center

544 Islington St.

Portsmouth, NH 03801